

The Influence of Henry Clay upon Abraham Lincoln

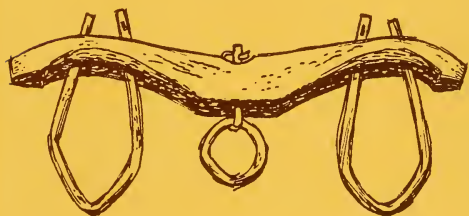
EDGAR DeWITT JONES



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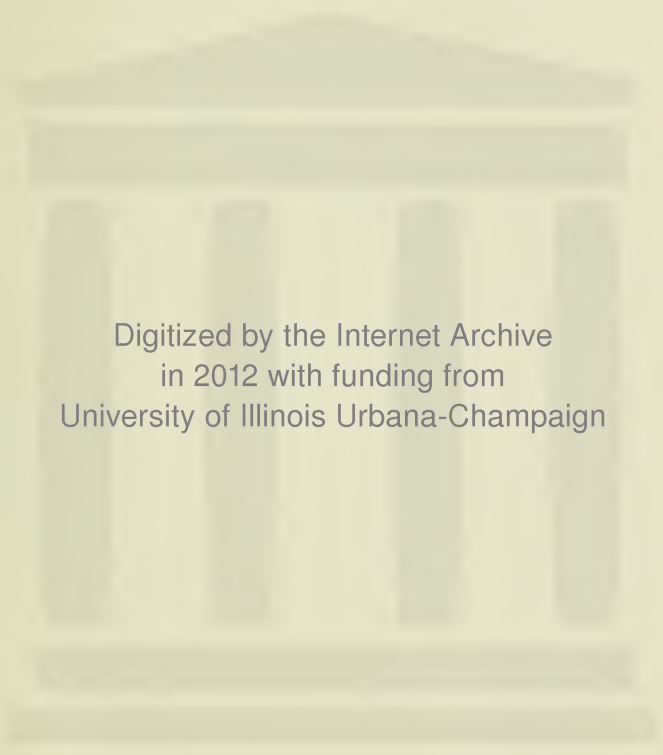


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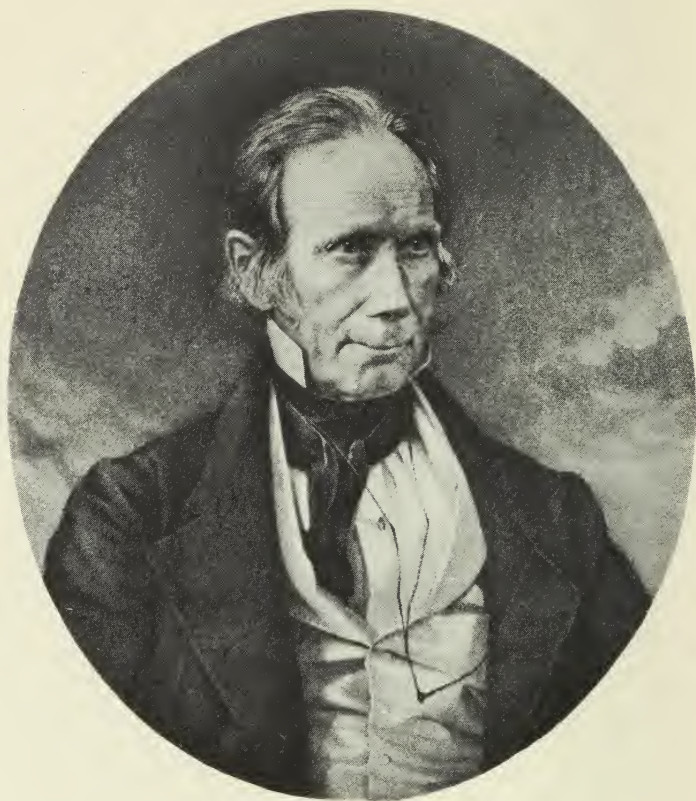
De Witt Jones

Let
not
The
Lincoln
in you
die.



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The Influence of
HENRY CLAY
upon
ABRAHAM LINCOLN



HENRY CLAY

*From a rare engraving in the collection of
William H. Townsend*

THE INFLUENCE OF
HENRY CLAY
UPON
ABRAHAM LINCOLN
by
EDGAR DeWITT JONES

Introduction by
William H. Townsend

Lexington, Kentucky
The Henry Clay Memorial Foundation
1952

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HENRY CLAY MEMORIAL FOUNDATION

Lexington, Kentucky

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To
Four Gentlemen of Lexington, Kentucky:
William H. Townsend
J. Winston Coleman, Jr.
Joseph C. Graves
Raymond F. McLain

Introduction

HENRY CLAY was the idol of Abraham Lincoln's youth and manhood. William H. Herndon says that, during all the years of his law partnership with Lincoln, he heard the senior partner praise only two historical characters—Thomas Jefferson and Henry Clay. When Douglas Volk made a plaster cast of Lincoln's face, he told the sculptor that he "almost worshiped Henry Clay." In January, 1861, the President-elect shut himself up in a dusty, vacant room over his brother-in-law's dry goods store to write his Inaugural Address and one of the four books he brought with him for reference was Clay's great Compromise speech of 1850.

Many persons know a great deal about Abraham Lincoln. Others know much about Henry Clay. However, the author of this brochure, Dr. Edgar DeWitt Jones, is the only person *known to me* who is an outstanding authority on *both* Lincoln and Clay.

Dr. Jones' opportunity to learn about Lincoln first-hand came early in his ministry when he was called to the pulpit of the First Christian

Church at Bloomington, Illinois, one of the towns on the old 8th Judicial Circuit that Lincoln rode. Jesse W. Fell, Leonard Swett and Judge David Davis, the three men most responsible for making Lincoln president, had lived at Bloomington. Owen Reeves, who had tried cases with and against Lincoln; former Governor "Private Joe" Fifer, who had heard the famed "Lost Speech"; Jim Ewing, whose father had operated the National Hotel—favorite stopping place of Circuit riding lawyers in Lincoln's day—and other old friends still lived there.

The fourteen years that Dr. Jones spent in Bloomington literally saturated him with Lincoln lore and when he moved to Detroit, he already owned a sizeable library of Lincolniana. During the more than a quarter century since then, the interest of Dr. Jones in the "First American" has never flagged. He has lectured on him, winning the W. J. Long prize for the best Lincoln sermon delivered in 1939. He has written about him—brochures like "The Greatening of Lincoln" and books like "Lincoln and the Preachers." He is a member of the advisory and governing boards of national Lincoln organizations, such as the Lincoln Life Foundation and the Abraham Lincoln Association.

Readers, therefore, will not be surprised to hear that Edgar DeWitt Jones not infrequently dreams of Lincoln. One of these dreams is so

amusing that, although I have related it on other occasions, it will, perhaps, bear repetition here.

Dr. Jones dreamed that he went down to his bank in Detroit and requested a loan. The affable Vice-President escorted him to a richly panelled, plate-glassed, chrome-trimmed cubicle, which modern institutions of this kind expressly reserve for such transactions, and made further inquiry. The Doctor mentioned a sum considerably larger than any amount which he had theretofore borrowed on his own signature alone. The banker said that because of this fact, he would like to have an endorser on the new note. "That is all right," replied the Doctor, "whose name would you like?" The banker thought for a moment and then said: "Well now, how about Abraham Lincoln—he appears to be a friend of yours."

Dr. Jones said that this was entirely agreeable to him and he, accordingly, set out for Springfield, with the note in his pocket. It did not seem long until he reached the west side of Springfield's public square and climbed a creaking stairway above a rusty, battered metal sign that read: "Lincoln & Herndon." Mr. Lincoln, alone in his bare, dingy office at the end of the narrow hallway, sat at a long pine table, looking over some papers. He greeted his visitor cordially and asked what he could do for him. The Doctor told him and Lincoln said: "Let me see the note." And then, as it was handed to him, the Doctor

woke up. Now, we shall never know whether or not the credit of Edgar DeWitt Jones was good with Abraham Lincoln!!

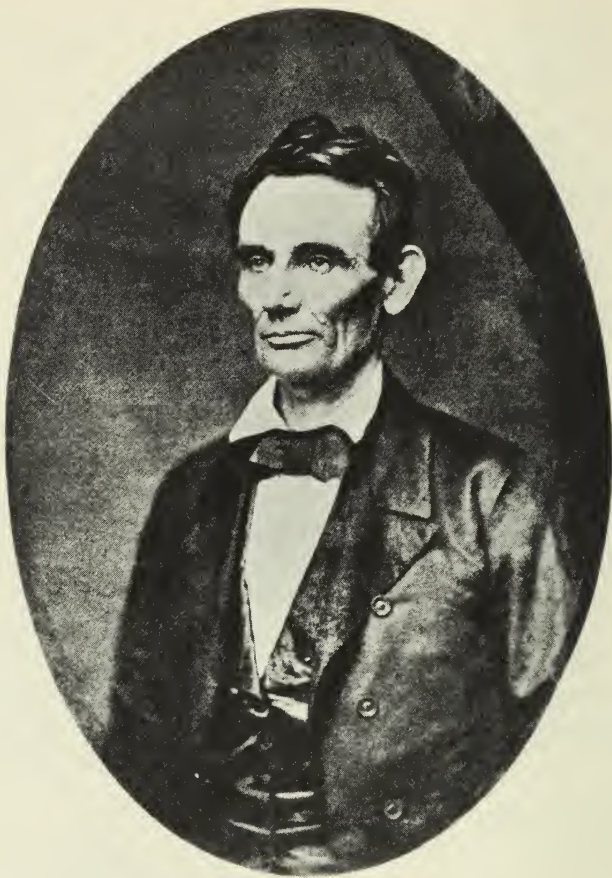
Dr. Jones' study of Henry Clay has been equally diligent and constant. He owns the largest Clay library now in private hands. For many years, his lecture on "Gallant Harry of the West" has been one of the most popular lectures on the public platform. His "Henry Clay—America's Greatest Natural Orator" is considered the finest chapter in his widely read book: "Lords of Speech."

In writing this brochure, Dr. Jones has not only done an excellent piece of literary work, but he has performed a task not hitherto undertaken; a study and appraisal of the influence of Henry Clay upon Abraham Lincoln which will be eagerly and profitably read not only by Lincolnians, but by all Americans who, in these eventful and precarious days, find interest and inspiration in the lives of their countrymen who guided this nation through the trials and tragedies of other years.

WILLIAM H. TOWNSEND

*Helm Place,
Lexington, Kentucky
February 12, 1952*

The Influence of
HENRY CLAY
upon
ABRAHAM LINCOLN



ABRAHAM LINCOLN

*From an original photograph in the
collection of William H. Townsend*

The Influence of Henry Clay upon Abraham Lincoln

ONE HUNDRED YEARS ago, on June 29, 1852, in the National Hotel, Washington, D. C., after a long and painful illness, Henry Clay finished his amazing course, in the seventy-sixth year of his illustrious life.

Eighty-seven years ago, on April 15, 1865, Abraham Lincoln breathed his last torturous breath, in the Peterson residence on Tenth Street, at the capital of the nation, aged fifty-six.

For the greater part of his political life Clay aspired to be President, but the grand prize eluded him, going, instead, to men of far less fame. Lincoln, a political disciple of Clay and less known at the time than either Seward or Douglas, took the nomination over the one and the Presidency over the other. Reëlected, he had scarcely entered upon his second term when the bullet of an assassin struck him down.

Clay's fame and popularity, which at times approached idolatry, began early and lasted long. Even in defeat his admirers showered him with gifts and praised him to the skies. Lincoln's public life began humbly, was marked at first by only moderate success and shadowed by defeat. In 1803, when he was twenty-six, Clay ran for the Kentucky Legislature, was elected, and served three terms in all. In 1832 Lincoln ran for the Illinois Legislature, and was defeated. He ran again in 1834, was elected, and served four terms in that capacity. Clay was in the national House of Representatives for six terms. Lincoln was a member of the House for one term, in the Thirtieth Congress.

Lincoln entered a wider arena when he opposed Douglas for the Senate and thereby greatened his reputation. Then came the Presidency and the purgatorial war years, during which he bore with all but superhuman patience the burden of State, and bowed but did not break before the storms of criticism and abuse. Not until "the deep damnation of his taking off" occurred did there begin his swift journey to a place amid the stars of fame—a fame which now fills the world.

At the time of Lincoln's birth, Clay was a United States Senator from Kentucky. And when Clay ran for President, in 1844, Lincoln was a Presidential elector for him in Illinois and made speeches in his behalf. When Clay died in 1852

Lincoln was campaigning for General Winfield Scott, the Whig candidate for President. Thus in life and death the destinies of Henry Clay and Abraham Lincoln were curiously intertwined.

Both Clay and Lincoln were men of sorrows and acquainted with grief, and this was true despite Clay's gay and debonair manner and Lincoln's quaint and sometimes salty humor. Death took all six of Clay's beloved daughters during his lifetime, and the son who bore his name, Henry Clay, Jr., fell at the battle of Buena Vista, bringing crushing sorrow to Ashland. Lincoln's second son, Edward Baker, died in childhood at Springfield, and William Wallace, affectionately known as "Willie," the apple of his father's eye, died during the tense and turbulent years at Washington. Both men suffered disappointments and bore heavy burdens. It is to their glory that they bore them so bravely.

I

THE FAMILY HERITAGE and upbringing of the two men provide both similarities and contrasts. Each was born on a farm; Clay, in a comfortable story-and-a-half frame house in Hanover county, Virginia, not far from Richmond, a center of a new world culture; Lincoln first glimpsed the light of day in a one-room log cabin in Hardin County (now LaRue), Kentucky, a sparsely set-



Henry Clay's Birthplace

From an early engraving in the collection of J. Winston Coleman

tled region, and off main traveled roads. The ancestry of both Clay and Lincoln was good without being distinguished. The forebears of each were English.

Clay's father was a Baptist preacher who had inherited a farm of some four hundred acres and a number of slaves. Not only so, but the Reverend John Clay had married a well-to-do wife who brought him another four hundred acre farm and additional slaves. The Clays of Virginia

were not of the "first families" of the Old Dominion, yet, compared with the Lincolns of Kentucky, they were literate, prosperous, and blessed with influential friends.

Albeit, the life of a Baptist preacher with a big family in a rural parish in the year 1777 was not a bed of roses. That section of Virginia called "The Slashes," was rough, unfertile, and recently trampled by battling armies. Luxuries were unknown, living plain and hard, diversions few. Clay's educational opportunities were almost as scanty as Lincoln's. The towheaded youth had about three years of schooling under Peter Deacon, who was irritable and liked his liquor, as against Lincoln's less than one year of teaching by Mentor Graham, who had a local reputation for erudition, and was temperate in all things. Naturally brilliant, Clay was not studiously inclined; Lincoln was a student to the end of his days.

Clay, destined to become a man of the hustings and the forum, was never quite at home in a library. Gerald W. Johnson, writing of Clay, says "It was a rare occasion for him to open a book."¹ Lincoln's love for books, especially in his Indiana days, amounted to a passion; and later Shakespeare cast a spell over him. While

1. *America's Silver Age*, Gerald W. Johnson, Harper and Brothers, New York, 1939, page 26. Mr. Johnson's book is a fascinating study of Clay and his contemporaries, with "Harry of the West" getting most of the limelight.



Abraham Lincoln's Birthplace

From an original photograph - Chicago Historical Society

still in his teens Clay came to know men of eminence: John Marshall, Bushrod Washington, Spencer Roane, George Wythe, and other men equally famous. Lincoln's years of young manhood were lonely years. Few illustrious persons came his way. Rather, his was the companionship of great phantoms.

A good stepfather, Captain Henry Watkins, was a factor in the Clay saga; and a kind stepmother, Sarah Bush Johnston, brought a benediction to

the Lincoln epic. Clay got off to a running start, due to influential friends of Captain Watkins in Richmond; and, later, in Kentucky, highly placed acquaintances boosted the fortunes of the young Virginian. Lincoln emerged slowly and painfully from obscurity by way of Indiana, his second home, and Illinois, his last. Clay went up like a rocket and stayed up. Lincoln grew like a tree which contends with poor soil, battles with contrary winds—and keeps on growing.

Physically the two statesmen were fashioned along the same streamlines. Each was over six feet in height, loose of frame, lean of flank. The cheekbones of both were high. Clay's hair, sparse on top, was silvery; Lincoln's abundant and unruly locks were dark and coarse. Clay's mouth was huge,—“prodigious,” some said. “In his old days,” writes Edward G. Parker in his *The Golden Age of American Oratory*,² “when the men crowded around him for a shake of his hand, and the women beset him for a kiss of his patriarchal lips, it was remarked that his capacity of gratifying this latter demand was unlimited, for the ample dimensions of his kissing apparatus enabled him completely to *rest* one side of it, while the other side was upon active duty.” Neither Clay nor Lincoln was a hand-

2. *The Golden Age of American Oratory*, Edward G. Parker, Whittemore, Niles and Hall, Boston, 1857, page 36. This volume, which is out of print and difficult to acquire, is unrivaled in the enchanting field it covers.

some man, but both were of impressive appearance, Clay being the more graceful in posture and movement. Clay was fastidious as to his attire; Lincoln indifferent to what he wore. Both towered above their fellows in a crowd. Clay's facial expression was usually one of mild benignity; Lincoln's countenance was often sad, occasionally transfigured by the friendliest of smiles.

The handwriting of both Clay and Lincoln was neat and legible. As a correspondent, Clay was profuse, formal, and undistinguished of style. Lincoln's letters, which reveal the man, were often brief, sometimes laconic, occasionally of ineffable beauty. Thus, he is represented in the volume entitled *A Treasury of the World's Great Letters* by three specimens, one of which is the immortal "Bixby Letter."

As a lawyer, Clay was the superior of Lincoln in persuasive eloquence before a jury, and was well-nigh irresistible as attorney for the defense. Lincoln surpassed Clay in knowledge of the law and was the more experienced in general practice. Clay was too much involved in politics to give his best to the Law, which has been called a jealous mistress. Lincoln's peak in the practice of law was the decade between 1850 and 1860, during which his reputation at the bar reached new heights.

II

HENRY CLAY belongs at the apex of that pyramidal coterie of America's most gifted orators in the golden age of oratory. He has been called by competent critics "America's greatest natural orator," and the distinction is beyond dispute. He was endowed with a mellifluous voice of vast range and extraordinary flexibility. It was a voice which once heard could never be forgotten. The last time John Randolph of Roanoke, himself an orator of parts, was present in the Senate Chamber, he was a sick man and had to be assisted to a seat. Senator Clay, his long time political foe, was speaking. "Lift me up! Lift me up!" commanded his old rival, "I came to hear that voice again." Not only Clay's voice but his whole being was eloquent. The flash of his glance; the sweep of his gestures; the posture and poise of his body; even his hands seemed to talk. He had a habit when in oratorical action of stepping from side to side, and "every little movement had a meaning of its own."

If Clay lacked the scholarship of Webster, he had what Webster did not have—a charm of personality and a way with him that swept multitudes as a mighty wind sways the trees of a forest. There was an air of grandeur about Webster; about Clay there was the bewitching aura of a *prima donna*. Nothing in the history

of great public speaking in this country quite parallels Henry Clay's power over an audience. To claim this for Clay is not to forget the golden speech of a Patrick Henry; the massive eloquence of a Webster; the rollicking humor of a "Tom" Corwin; the polished periods of an Edward Everett; the silver tongue of a Wendell Phillips; the gorgeous exuberance of an Ingersoll; or the melodious fluency of a Bryan. In my student days in Lexington, during the late eighteenth-nineties, I met an aged woman who had heard Clay speak. Her wrinkled face glowed with pride as she said: "Why, Sir, he looked and spoke like a god."³

Of Clay's oratory, Jo. G. Baldwin, in his *Party Leaders*, first published in 1854, writes:

It has been said that the speeches and writings of Webster will live long after Clay's shall have perished. This is probably true; but it does not follow from this that Webster was the greater man, or that he will descend with more honor to posterity. The evidence of his greatness in *one* province of mind will be better preserved, but the greatness itself may not be relatively magnified. Patrick Henry has left scarcely a memorial of his genius, yet, his fame today is wider, and its luster as fresh, as when he died. Clay's claims to fame are not in his printed speeches. They are in his measures, which are deeds, and in his

3. James Parton, whose admiration for Clay was unbridled, wrote: "Mr. Clay's usefulness as a statesman was limited by his talent as an orator. He relied too much on his oratory. He was never such a student as a man entrusted with public business ought to be. See *Famous Americans of Recent Times*, Ticknor and Fields, Boston, 1867, pages 51 and 52.

acts, which are monuments; and Clay's deeds will outlive Webster's words. Clay projected his character upon the imaginations and hearts of his generation; and it was there imprinted in the strong colors of the sublime and the heroic; and such an impression descends through tradition upon succeeding ages.

Abraham Lincoln was a public speaker of remarkable force, clarity, and feeling, but he was not an orator in the sense that Clay was. The Kentuckian was a born orator; the Illinoisan was a public speaker of note by way of much study, discipline, and self-criticism. Through perseverance and practice he attained to a literary style of rare beauty and haunting simplicity. Surprising as it may seem to some, his early style of public speaking tended to floridity; even, in a few instances, to grandiloquence. It is possible, more, it is probable, that Lincoln set out to pattern his oratory in the manner of his "beau ideal of a statesman," Henry Clay, but it was a case of David in Saul's armor—it didn't fit. Slowly there evolved the Lincolnian style, terse, logical, direct, and by-and-by the lofty Biblical phrasing as of the Gettysburg Address, the Bixby Letter, and the Second Inaugural.

Henry Clay's speeches which moved multitudes are disappointing in print. They are not precisely cold or lifeless, but the personality of the orator is missing, the fire, the charm, the magic presence. Today, millions who know of

Clay's fame as an orator have never read so much as one of his speeches. By the same token, millions who are unfamiliar with much of Lincoln's life and works treasure his masterpieces and repeat his deathless phrases the nation over and beyond. Clay's is the oratory of presence, of voice, of delivery. Lincoln's is the oratory of light, of epigram, of verbal felicity plus the prophet's vision. He lacked Clay's glorious voice but his rather high-pitched tones were pleasant to the ear and carried far.

"To compare the oratorical output of a Lincoln with that of a Clay, a Webster, or a Bryan is like ranging the thin precious volume of a Rupert Brooke alongside the lavish effusions of a Browning, a Tennyson, or a Longfellow. This son of poverty, who was unacquainted with college or university, won his place as a lord of language by less than half a dozen speeches of such a character as to set them apart in classic greatness."⁴

It may be profitable to observe just here that while we have had Presidents who were eloquent speakers, not one of the truly great orators who aspired to the Presidency was elected, to wit: Webster, Clay, and Bryan.⁵

4. *Lincoln and the Preachers*, Edgar DeWitt Jones, Harper and Brothers, New York, 1948, chapter XII, page 132.

5. Of our Presidents, John Quincy Adams, Lincoln, Garfield, Benjamin Harrison, and Wilson, were orators of distinction. Franklin D. Roosevelt, during his Presidency, was the most effective voice on the radio. Thomas Jefferson, a lord of written speech, was a poor public speaker.

III

ABRAHAM LINCOLN's admiration for Henry Clay was unaffectedly enthusiastic, strong, and abiding. The Kentuckian was his exemplar in statesmanship and his mentor politically. The irrepressible Dennis Hanks, Lincoln's unschooled and voluble cousin, had something to say on this subject when, in a letter to William H. Herndon, dated March 12, 1866, he wrote: "Abe turned Whig in 1827, 8. Think Col. Jones made him a Whig, dont know it. Most of all he always loved Hen. Clay's speeches. I think this was the cause mostly." Old Dennis, in his own colloquial manner told the truth. Henry Clay was a prime factor in making Abraham Lincoln a Whig.

In Lambert's *Lincolnum*, in listing books from Lincoln's library, occurs this notation: "Item 81. *The Life and Speeches of Henry Clay*, two volumes in one, 8vo, original morocco, cover burnt and repaired, in green morocco slip case. Philadelphia 1854." On the flyleaf is written: "This book was used by Abraham Lincoln when making his first great antislavery speeches, preceding the memorable campaign with Douglas. He quoted largely from Clay's speeches with wonderful effect. Passages on 21 pages have been marked in blue, red, or black pencil, or in ink, either by Lincoln, or as having been read by Lincoln in his speeches."

Mr. Lincoln's references to Henry Clay in his political speeches are numerous and always laudatory. Thus at Peoria, Illinois, October 16, 1854, Mr. Lincoln said: "Finally, Judge Douglas invokes against me the memory of Clay and Webster. They were great men and men of great deeds, but have I assailed them? For what is it that their lifelong enemy shall now make profit by assuming to defend them against their lifelong friend?"

At Bloomington, Illinois, May 29, 1856, Lincoln said: "Not that Clay hated slavery less but that he loved the whole Union more." In his debate with Douglas at Ottawa, August 21, 1858, Lincoln spoke as follows:

Henry Clay, my beau ideal of a statesman, for whom I fought all my humble life—Henry Clay once said of a class of men who would repress all tendencies to liberty and ultimate emancipation, that they must, if they would do this, go back to the era of independence, and muzzle the cannon which thunders its annual joyous return, they must blow out the moral lights around us; they must penetrate the human soul, and eradicate there the love of liberty; and then, and not until then, could they perpetuate slavery in this country.

And again, at Alton, October 15, 1858:

When Henry Clay says that in laying the foundations of societies in our territories where it does not exist, he would be opposed to the introduction of slavery as an element, I insist that we have his warrant,—

his license—for insisting upon the exclusion of that element which he declared in such strong and emphatic language was most hateful to him.

The published Lincoln-Douglas Debates record no less than forty-one references made by Lincoln to Clay, his political principles, and policies. In the Robert Todd Lincoln Papers, opened to the public July 26, 1947, there are nine letters written to Abraham Lincoln by devoted followers of Henry Clay who said they would support him because he was a Clay man.

Henry Clay took vast pride in the formation of a set of policies which he called the "American System." In an important speech delivered on this subject at Cincinnati, August 3, 1830, the Senator said:

With respect to the American System, which demands your undivided approbation, and in regard to which you are pleased to estimate much too highly my service, its great object is to secure the independence of our country, to augment its wealth, and to diffuse the comforts of civilization throughout society. That object, it has been supposed, can be best accomplished by introducing, encouraging, and protecting the arts among us. It may be called a system of real reciprocity, under the operation of which one citizen, or one part of the country, can exchange one description of the produce of labor, with another citizen, or another part of the country, for a different description of the produce of labor. It is a system which develops, improves, and perfects the capabilities of our common country, and enables us to avail our-

selves of all of the resources with which Providence has blest us. To the laboring classes it is invaluable, since it increases and multiplies the demands for their industry, and gives them an option of employments. It adds power and strength to our Union by new ties of interest, blending and connecting together all its parts and creating an interest with each in the prosperity of the whole.

A scrutiny of this, and other speeches by Mr. Clay, discloses that the American System had, it would appear, five points, namely: 1. A High Protective Tariff, 2. Internal Improvements, 3. Loyal Adherence to the Constitution of the United States, 4. Ardent Support of the Federal Union, and 5. A Passionate Patriotism and Belief in the Lofty Destiny of America. It is pertinent just here to inquire what Mr. Lincoln's attitude was toward this "System" devised and eloquently expounded by "Harry of the West." Categorically the answer is negatory. He never discussed the five points in detail or alluded to them seriatim in his speeches or writings.⁶

On the high protective tariff issue, which was the main plank in the American System, Lincoln

6. It is difficult to define Clay's political philosophy. He was not an original thinker in this realm as were Hamilton, Jefferson and Madison. He began as a Jeffersonian, became a Whig, and his political views at times took on a Hamiltonian cast. But Clay thought better of the populace than did the great Federalist. Lincoln, also a Whig, before he became a Republican, freely acknowledged his debt to Jefferson. Thus he said in a letter of April 6, 1858 to H. L. Pierce, and others, replying to an invitation to a festival in honor of Jefferson's birthday: "The principles of Jefferson are the definitions and axioms of free society."

stood with Clay. Between his election to Congress in 1846 and taking his seat in 1847, Lincoln wrote at some length on the subject, and concluded with a paragraph in which occur these words: "... The abandonment of the protective policy by the American government must result in the increase of both useless labor and idleness, and so in proportion, must produce want and ruin among the people."

As for "Internal Improvements," the issues which absorbed Mr. Lincoln's attention both as candidate and President were of too crucial a nature to permit consideration of lesser policies. When one's house is afire he is concerned with putting the blaze out, not with painting the house or papering the walls. Had his administration been in times of peace we may readily assume the President would have given his support to necessary betterments of the nation's internal affairs.

As to loyalty to the Constitution and undying support of the Federal Union—Lincoln lived and died in behalf of the integrity of the one and the indissoluble nature of the other.⁷ Citations from his speeches, documents, and correspondence which show his devotion to these basic beliefs are legion.

7. Burton J. Hendrick, in his *Bulwark of the Republic*, Little, Brown & Co., Boston, 1937, calls Clay "An idolator of the Constitution," see index, page 455. In a speech at Kalamazoo, Michigan, Aug. 27, 1856, Lincoln said: "Don't interfere with anything in the Constitution. That must be maintained, for it is the only safeguard of our liberties."

On the subject of Abraham Lincoln's patriotism, it is enough to aver that his love for the land of his birth was on a par with that of Henry Clay. Here, the disciple was as great as his master. Both could have said as did Webster in his speech at the completion of the Bunker Hill Monument on June 17, 1843, in a voice trembling with emotion, "Thank God, I—I also—am an American."

IV

ON THE red-hot issue of slavery, neither Clay nor Lincoln was an Abolitionist. Both regarded slavery as an evil and alien to the spirit of "a government by the people, of the people, and for the people." Clay compromised on the slavery issue, believing, in so doing, that he was serving the best interests of the harrassed nation. Gerald W. Johnson, in his book, *America's Silver Age*, a study of the statecraft of Clay, Webster, and Calhoun, says on page 242, "Like most reasonable men of his own day, and like his great pupil, Lincoln, Clay, while opposing slavery, did not consider it an evil great enough to justify the destruction of the Union." Clay's sensitive conscience on slavery found some surcease in the American Colonization Society, of which he was one of the founders and for some years its president. Today, this scheme of ship-

ping the freed Negroes to Liberia and colonizing them there, appears chimerical, impractical, and an evasion of the real issue. But to those who faced the possibility of a dissolution of the Union on the matter of slavery, the plan seemed a way out. Lincoln accepted the plan with some misgivings, saying, as late as 1857, in a speech at Springfield, Illinois: "The enterprise is a difficult one, but 'Where there is a will there is a way,' and what colonization needs is a hearty will." To slave owners, with characteristic candor, he made his position plain. "I have no prejudice," said he, "against the Southern people. They are just what we would be in their situation. If slavery did not now exist among them, they would not introduce it. If it did now exist among us, we would not instantly give it up..... When Southern people tell us they are no more responsible for the origin of slavery than we are, I acknowledge the fact."⁸

President Lincoln, after the manner of his illustrious mentor, was also willing to compromise on slavery, if thereby the Union could be saved. Thus, in his oft-quoted letter to Horace Greeley, under date of August 22, 1862, Mr. Lincoln wrote: "My paramount object in this struggle is to save the Union, and is not either

8. From Lincoln's speech at Peoria, October 16, 1854, *Complete Works of Abraham Lincoln*, Nicolay & Hay (The Gettysburg Edition), Francis D. Tandy Co., New York, 1905, vol. II, page 190.

to save or to destroy slavery. If I could save the Union without freeing any slaves, I would do it, and if I could save it by freeing all the slaves, I would do it; and if I could save it by freeing some and leaving others alone, I would also do that." Unlike his "beau ideal of a statesman," Mr. Lincoln never owned a slave, nor can we imagine him in such a proprietorship. He once said, "I am naturally anti-slavery. If slavery is not wrong, nothing is wrong. I cannot remember when I did not so think and feel."⁹

In this connection it is pertinent to recall the sapient observations of James Parton in his chapter on Clay in *Famous Americans of Recent Times*, page 51:

While slavery existed, no statesmanship was possible, except that which was temporary and temporizing. The thorn, we repeat, was in the flesh; and the doctors were all pledged to try and cure the patient without extracting it. They could do nothing but dress the wound, put on this salve and that, give the sufferer a little respite from anguish, and, after a brief interval, repeat the operation. Of all these physicians, Henry Clay was the most skillful and effective. He both handled the sore place with consummate dexterity, and kept up the constitution of the patient by

9. From a letter to A. G. Hodges, April 4, 1864, *Complete Works of Abraham Lincoln*, Nicolay & Hay, (The Gettysburg Edition), Francis D. Tandy Co., New York, 1905, vol. X, page 65. This is, for Lincoln, a long letter and sets forth his views on slavery and the Union with ringing conviction. In the same letter occurs a famous sentence, often quoted, to wit: "I claim not to have controlled events, but confess plainly that events have controlled me."

stimulants, which enabled him, at last, to live through the appalling operation which removed the cause of his agony.

Lincoln, let it be said reverently, was the surgeon who performed the major operation which removed the thorn. Furthermore, it is probable that had it not been for Clay there would have been no Union for Lincoln to save.¹⁰

V

On July 16, 1852, just seventeen days after the death of Senator Clay, there was held in the State House, Springfield, Illinois, a solemn memorial convocation in honor of that statesman. The Illinois Journal announced the order of the day as follows:

Honors to the Memory of Henry Clay. Order of Procession. The procession will be formed on Adams Street, in front of the Episcopal Church, the right resting on 3d at ten o'clock. The funeral services of the Protestant Episcopal Church will be read by the Reverend Charles Dresser, (in the church) at the close of which the procession will be formed in the following order:

10. On the Compromise of 1850, Carl Schurz, in his two volume biography of Henry Clay, writes: "One effect it produced which Calhoun had clearly predicted when he warned the slaveholding States against compromises as an invention of the enemy; it adjourned the decisive conflict until the superiority of the North over the South in population and material resources was overwhelming, and, as it happened, until a party, and at its head a man, held the helm of affairs, whose antislavery principles and aims made it sure that the cause of the mischief would not in any form survive the issue of the struggle." Vol. II, pages 372 and 373.

Chief Marshall
Assistant Marshalls
Clergy and Orator
Judges of and Officers of the United States Circuit
and District Courts and Members of the Bar.
Officers of the State
Officers of the County
Mayor and City Council
Citizens—four abreast
Sons of Temperance
Independent Order of Odd Fellows
Masonic Order

Seventy-six minute guns were fired and the bells tolled beginning at 11 o'clock, A.M. During the proceedings business was suspended; stores were closed. It was an impressive occasion, and Abraham Lincoln, the orator of the day, was equal to the solemn event. He spoke for about forty minutes, and in the course of the eulogy said:

Henry Clay is dead!—He breathed his last on yesterday at twenty minutes after eleven, in his chamber at Washington.¹¹ To those who followed his lead in public affairs, it more appropriately belongs to pronounce his eulogy, and pay specific honors to the memory of the illustrious dead. But all Americans may show the grief which his death inspires, for his character and fame are national property. As on a question of liberty, he knew no North, no South, no East, no West, but only the Union which held

11. Evidently Mr. Lincoln wrote this speech, or part of it, on June 30th, the day after Mr. Clay's passing. In delivering it on July 16 he may have omitted or changed this sentence. However, it appears as noted in all of the printed forms of the speech which the writer has seen.

them all in its sacred circle, so now his countrymen will know no grief, that is not as wide-spread as the bounds of the confederacy. The career of Henry Clay was a public career. From his youth he has been devoted to the public service, at a period too, in the world's history justly regarded as a remarkable era in human affairs. He witnessed in the beginning the throes of the French Revolution. He saw the rise and fall of Napoleon. He was called upon to legislate for America, and direct her policy when all Europe was the battle-field of contending dynasties, and when the struggle for supremacy imperiled the rights of all neutral nations. His voice spoke war and peace in the contest with Great Britain. When Greece rose against the Turks and struck for liberty, his name was mingled with the battle cry of freedom. When South America threw off the thralldom of Spain, his speeches were read at the head of her armies by Bolivar. His name has been, and will continue to be, hallowed in two hemispheres, for it is—

“One of the few, the immortal names
That were not born to die.”

There are two things about this speech, of which the passage just quoted is but a fragment, that deserve mention. First, the eulogy shows the depths of Abraham Lincoln's affection and admiration for Henry Clay and, second, it reveals the noble eloquence of which Mr. Lincoln was capable when the theme was congenial.

It must be apparent from even so cursory a review of the lives and deeds of these two illustrious sons of the Republic that Henry Clay's influence on Abraham Lincoln is an important

and fascinating fact of our history. What Jefferson was to Madison and Monroe, Clay was to Lincoln, but with this difference—the master at Ashland was a more lovable person than the Sage of Monticello.

Nine months before Clay's death he listed the events in his political career and prepared them for an inscription to be put upon a large gold medal which his friends in New York caused to be struck in commemoration of his public services. Here they are:

Senate, 1806
Speaker, 1811
War of 1812 with Great Britain
Treaty of Ghent, 1814
Missouri Compromise, 1821
Friendship for Spanish America, 1822
American System, 1824
Defender of Independence for Greece, 1824
Secretary of State, 1825
Panama Instructions, 1826
Tariff Compromise, 1833
Public Domain, 1833-1841
Peace with France Preserved, 1835
The Last Great Compromise, 1850¹²

On consideration of these important events by which Mr. Clay wished to be remembered, the question emerges, by what events in Mr. Lincoln's public life will posterity choose to

12. Clay's summary of the chief events in his public life is so brief as to necessitate a few additional words by way of clarification for present-day readers.

remember him? Surely such a chronicle would include the following:

The "Lost Speech," delivered at the organization of the Republican Party in Illinois, Bloomington, May 29, 1856.

Series of seven debates with Senator Stephen A. Douglas, 1858

Cooper Institute speech, New York City, Feb. 27, 1860

Elected President of the United States, Nov. 9, 1860

Issued Emancipation Proclamation, Jan. 1, 1863

Address delivered at the dedication of the National Cemetery, Gettysburg, Pa., Nov. 19, 1863

Letter to Lydia Bixby, Nov. 21, 1864

Reëlected President United States, Nov. 8, 1864

Message to Congress and Proclamation of Amnesty, Dec. 6, 1864

Second Inaugural Address, March 4, 1865

Last Public Address setting forth conciliatory attitude toward the South, April 11, 1865

VI

HENRY CLAY and Lexington are forever linked in song and story. To this community, he gave generously of his time and talents. Thus, his connection with Transylvania University was intimate and significant. From 1805 to 1807 he was professor of law and politics in that institution. He was an honored member of the Board of Trustees for over twenty years, and active in the choice of Dr. Alva Woods of Brown University to succeed as president the brilliant Horace

Holley, who resigned amid a storm of controversy. Then, in 1822, Transylvania conferred on Mr. Clay the honorary degree of Doctor of Laws. In 1843, Lexington was the arena of the famous debate between Alexander Campbell, famed polemic and theologian of the Disciples of Christ, and Dr. Nathan L. Rice, noted Presbyterian clergyman. Mr. Clay was made moderator of this debate, which was held in the Main Street Christian Church, lasted sixteen days and attracted throngs of partisans, some coming hundreds of miles. In print this debate fills 912 pages, with more than half a million words. Procuring Henry Clay to referee this verbal contest was somebody's work of genius.

Clay's pride in Ashland, his spacious country estate, resembled that of Jefferson for his beloved Monticello, and of Webster for the broad acres of his Marshfield. Here, happily, was an oasis in the desert of Clay's political disappointments; a haven from the storms of partisan controversy and abuse. Here, the veteran of many political battles loved to pace along a path beneath the friendly trees, while fondly reflecting on the domestic scene or contemplating, from afar, what was happening at Washington. To tarry at Ashland is to sense the mystic presence of him who loved his Old Kentucky Home with a love that knew no bounds.

In 1847 the Lincolns made a three weeks' visit

in Lexington with Mrs. Lincoln's home folks, the Robert S. Todds of West Main Street. They were on their way to Washington, where the Springfield lawyer was to take his seat in the Thirtieth Congress. This was one of the few vacations the Lincolns had carefully planned, and there is every reason to believe it was the most enjoyable. Mrs. Lincoln had not been back home since she left in 1839. Now she was bringing her Congressman-elect husband and two bright little sons to the place of her birth. Did she recall, as she looked upon the familiar scenes of her girlhood, a letter she once wrote to her friend, Miss Margaret Wickliffe, in which she told of the man of her choice, his personal appearance, tall, gaunt, awkward, and then added, "But I mean to make him to be President of the United States all the same"? We do not know the answer but it is pleasant to surmise that she did recall the incident

In an unpublished manuscript by Dr. Lyman Beecher Todd, entitled "Concerning Lincoln's Last Hours," dated March 23, 1901, now in possession of the Honorable William H. Townsend, and used here by his gracious permission, occurs this statement: "I have seen [him [Lincoln] when twice he visited Lexington, Kentucky,—on last occasion when he was the guest of Mr. Clay at Ashland." This reference is evidently to the visit of the Lincolns to Kentucky in 1849 in

connection with the settlement of the Robert S. Todd estate.

There is no evidence to date, in newspapers or letters, to show that the Lincolns visited the Clays at Ashland on the occasion of their visit to Lexington in 1847, but the case is one where the circumstantial evidence is transcendent. The Todds were both personal and political friends of Mr. Clay. Mary had been nurtured in the belief that Henry Clay was destined to be President of the United States. He had probably dandled that lively little girl more than once upon his knees. What could be more natural and desirable than that Lincoln should visit his "beau ideal of a statesman," or, that Clay was pleased to welcome at Ashland this rising young Whig and loyal disciple?

What would we not give for a candid camera shot of Clay greeting Lincoln at Ashland! How we wish we knew what the two canny politicians talked about when they folded their long legs and invited their souls!

Here in Lexington, on November 15, 1847, Lincoln heard Clay deliver an address at the Lower Market-House on "The Conduct of the Mexican War." Mr. Clay spoke for two and one-half hours, according to the *Lexington Observer & Reporter* of November 17, 1847. In the course of his speech Mr. Clay said: "This is no war of defense, but one unnecessary and of

offensive aggression. It is Mexico that is defending her firesides, her castles, and her altars, not we."

The noted lawyer and historian, William H. Townsend, in his volume, *Lincoln and His Wife's Home Town*, says in reference to Lincoln's course in the Thirtieth Congress: "Lincoln had never accepted the repeated declaration by President Polk that the first blood of the war with Mexico had been shed on American soil, and Clay's address at Lexington had convinced him that such was not the case."

Surely one of the brightest spots in the memory of the Lincolns was that visit to Lexington in the autumn of 1847. They must have lived that experience over and over again and the recollection helped to assuage the grief that they were to know in later years.

Then came the Civil War. The House had divided. Clay's family was also divided. Of his sons, James went with the Confederacy, and died in exile in Canada; John and Thomas stayed with the Union. John, who was then living at the Ashland Stock Farm, sent to President Lincoln a snuffbox which had been presented to his father, with friendly greetings from Mrs. Clay and himself. To this the President replied as follows:

EXECUTIVE MANSION

Washington, August 9, 1862.

Mr. John M. Clay,

My Dear Sir,—The snuff-box you sent, with the accompanying note, was received yesterday.

Thanks for this *memento* of your great and patriotic father. Thanks also for the assurance that, in these days of dereliction, you remain true to his principles. In the concurrent sentiment of your venerable mother, so long the partner of his bosom and his honors, and lingering now, where he *was*, but for the call to rejoin him where he *is*, I recognize his voice, speaking as it ever spoke, for the Union, the Constitution, and the freedom of mankind.¹³

Your Obt. Servt.,
A. Lincoln.

Thus, again the names of Henry Clay and Abraham Lincoln were united, not only in the mystic bonds of memory but also in the unshakeable conviction that “liberty and union, now and forever” are “one and inseparable.”

13. Here is one of Mr. Lincoln's most felicitous notes. The diction is choice and the sympathy expressed tenderly beautiful. Few statesmen have been able to compress so much of value in so small a compass as did Mr. Lincoln. Complete Works of Abraham Lincoln, Nicolay & Hay (Gettysburg Edition), Francis D. Tandy Co., New York, 1905, vol. VII, page 307.

Executive Mansion,

Washington. August 9. 1862

Mrs John M. Cley.

My dear Sir:

The snuff-box you sent, with the accompanying note, was received yesterday.

Thanks for this memento of your great and patriotic father. Thanks also for the assurance that, in these days of delection, you remain true to his principles. In the concurrent sentiment of your venerable mother, so long the partner of his toils and his honors, and lingering now, where he was, but for the call to rejoin him where he is, I recognize his voice, speaking as it ever spoke, for the Union, the Constitution, and the freedom of mankind.

Yours Obedt Servt.

A. Lincoln

VII

WHAT IS so enchanting as the American Dream? To be possessed of that Dream presupposes that, like St. Paul, one must be obedient to the vision splendid. To muse long and deeply on that Dream is to conclude that our Republic is opulent in preëminent personalities. Some of these were men to match the mountains, and shine in history as steadily as the Polar star. A simple reference to the states which gave them birth, or provided the theater for their activities, is but to recall their shining names.

Think of New York and Alexander Hamilton emerges; speak of Virginia and Thomas Jefferson is lord of the event; recall Pennsylvania and Benjamin Franklin takes a philosophic bow; dream of Massachusetts and Daniel Webster mounts the rostrum; name Missouri and the portly form of Thomas Hart Benton looms impressively; consider South Carolina and John C. Calhoun dominates the scene; talk of Tennessee and Andrew Jackson strides upon the stage; mention Illinois and Abraham Lincoln rises to his full height—"the prairie lawyer, master of us all;" muse on Kentucky and Henry Clay stands up to speak, his marvelous voice falling like the strains of martial music on the listening multitude as he proclaims: "The Union is my country; the thirty states are my country;

Kentucky is my country, and Virginia, no more
than any other of the states of the Union. . . .
I know no South, no North, no East, no West."

They are gone who seemed so great—
Gone; but nothing can bereave them
Of the force they made their own
Being here, and we believe them
Something far advanced in state
And that they wear a truer crown
Than any wreath that men can weave
them.

Speak no more of their renown,
Lay your earthly fancies down,
And in the vast cathedral leave them . . .¹⁴

¹⁴. Adapted from Tennyson's "Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington."

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*Three thousand copies of this book have been printed
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